

HINTS TO HUNTSMEN

ANSTRUTHER THOMSON



JOHN A. SEEVERNS

HINTS
TO
HUNTSMEN
BY

Edwin Her Thompson

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1844
The North
The South
The West
The East

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TO
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BY

J. ANSTRUTHER THOMSON

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These Notes were written at various times for the guidance of different Huntsmen, and are now printed in the hope that they may promote thoughtfulness, and induce the rising generation of Hunt Servants to know

“THE REASON WHY.”

J. ANSTRUTHER THOMSON.

1891.

10/10

HINTS TO HUNTSMEN.

TO HUNTSMEN.

IF you have any business to do in town *do it*, and return home. Avoid much company, and be at home to attend to your business. Let each man understand what he has to do, and *see* that he does it, and is at work at the proper time. Every occurrence to be reported, and no fault overlooked. Captain Percy Williams' advice to Tom Firr, when he was promoted, was: "Stay at home with your hounds, and wear a white neckcloth"; and he also added, "Keep your temper, and stick to the line," which is the best advice ever given to a Huntsman.

THE KENNEL.

The first thing towards health is cleanliness; the chief thing for condition is exercise. Keep for your own information a statement of each Hound that died—the symptoms, treatment, and effect of treatment. Give them lots of slow exercise, and have Hounds rather light in condition to begin Cub-

hunting. Don't wash Hounds, but, if they can't be kept clean without it, it must be done. Keeping tired Hounds in the cold waiting for their turn to be washed is certainly bad for them.

They ought to be fed and shut up as soon as possible. After being shut up for some hours, turn them off the benches, and add some fresh straw. Of course, any accident must be attended to immediately.

Some people feed hot, some cold; some throw away the flesh and mix with broth, others throw away the broth and mix with water. I think both are wrong. Hounds should have both broth and flesh (and, I believe, bones also). The only reason that the broth is thrown away and water substituted is the fear of acidity in the broth. With proper care this should never happen. You may as well give your Hounds poison as sour broth. After hunting feed them with the chill off; at other times I am inclined to feed cold and thick.

Make your Hounds fond of you; feed them and coax them; play with them; do everything to gain their affection; don't check them for jumping on you; wear a kennel coat when among them, and don't use a whip. Beckford says, "Hounds should love and fear their Huntsman; they should fear him much, but love him

more. Without doubt, Hounds would do more for their Huntsman if they loved him better." Perfection in handiness is to work without a Whipper-in.

Goodall, Huntsman to the Belvoir, was very fond of his Hounds, and they were fond of him. At the meet, they would follow his horse in a semi-circle close up to his stirrup-iron, looking up and watching him. He never deceived or neglected them, and he was continually cheering and making much of them; but he let his men crack into them without rating if they did anything wrong. "When he wanted them he invariably went himself to fetch them."

What is wanted is a quick-hunting pack of Hounds, and to use them quietly. During Cubhunting, Hounds should be divided into equal lots—dogs and bitches mixed. Hunt alternate days. After eight or nine weeks form them into packs more sorty and better matched. In spring hunting, when short of Hounds, make them into two lots again, and work alternate days. Any Hound that is wild and obstinate may do an extra turn with either pack.

WHIPPER-IN.

At exercise the men are all to be dressed alike, either round hats and leggings, or high hats and boots. No spurs unless for particular horses. A Whipper-in need not turn his horse every time he speaks to a Hound. A Whipper-in sometimes rides across the road every time a Hound stops, and in turning his horse often touches him with the spur, besides swinging about on the saddle, which often causes sore backs.

Take care of your horses. You are sure to require all the "go" you have before you get home. There is no exception to this rule.

Whips' language should be distinct and sharp and not repeated too often, and the second time repeated louder and sharper. In drawing a Hound in Kennel give him time to come. If the Hound will come for the Huntsman's voice, a Whipper-in should not speak at all—certainly not before the Huntsman has called him twice. The practice has been that the moment the Huntsman calls a Hound a Whipper-in gives him a rap on the back, with "Get on"; the consequence is that the Hound, instead of coming when called, gets out of the way to avoid the blow, which he expects to follow his name. Do away with the use of whips as much as possible. Have two short whips for use only in the feeding house. Instead of a whip let the men take a pair of couples.

IN THE FIELD.

In going through a line of gates, if the gate opens towards the Hounds, the First Whip swings it, and goes on, the Second Whip riding up quietly to catch it. If it opens away, the First Whip opens it, goes through, and holds it. When the Hounds are through the gate, the Second Whip trots on in front to the next gate, and so on alternately.

The first thing for a Whipper-in to learn is to take care of his Horse, and after that to keep his eyes open, his mouth shut, and his whip quiet. Cracking whips to head a Fox is not so good a plan as tapping the saddle. You crack a whip to stop Hounds, and then crack it to encourage them to catch a Fox!

If Hounds will obey the Huntsman's word, the Whipper-in need not speak at all. Therefore his word should not follow too soon on that of the Huntsman. The quieter he keeps his whip, the better for his Horse, and the more attention Hounds will pay to it when they hear it.

Whippers-in cannot get too quietly up to Hounds. Ride at them to stop them. Having done so, when they turn to the Huntsman, wait on them and clip into them, but not at the Huntsman's heels. It is no use racing over a big field trying to strike a Hound—

it only knocks your Horse about, and makes the Hound know how to shirk you.

A sensible Whipper-in will wait his opportunity and single out his Hound. He will then hit him hard and rate him well. A bad Whipper-in will ride into the middle of the Hounds, and put the whole pack into confusion and perhaps hit the wrong one. If Hounds do wrong when the body is running a Fox, they should merely be put on, and punishment deferred until the next fault. When Hounds are casting and a young Hound does wrong (for instance, runs a hare), he should be quietly stopped, and no further noise made at the time. If he is punished, he will try no more; and if there is any noise, it will only disturb the rest of the pack. When a real good bit of riot happens (running a roe-deer for instance), the Huntsman should keep calm, and not damn the Whips; they are sure to be excited enough, and, if damned in addition, will probably lose their heads. Having succeeded in stopping the Hounds, get them clear of the Horses into a quiet corner. The Whips should speak to the culprits by name, ride up to them, and strike hard. They should not rate and use their whips indiscriminately. When the Hounds separate, the Huntsman should ride quietly on, and

as they endeavour to return to him, the Whips will then have another opportunity of repeating the correction till the confirmed rebels drop their sterns.

Trust your Hounds. There is nothing sounds worse than every time a hare jumps up, to hear the men exclaim, "See that." Better be quiet silent, and if any Hound is disposed to take notice, speak to it by name with "'Ware hare," distinctly and quietly. Always say exactly what you mean to Hounds. If you mean "'Ware hare," say so, not, "To him back." Never strike a Hound until he deserves it. "Punishment," says Beckford, "should be justice—not revenge; the intention is to prevent the repetition of the offence." Don't allow the Hounds to rake away from covert to covert; they should follow the Huntsman and no one else. Don't allow them to go in front of the First Whipper-in: if they do, they will by degrees follow him without any attention to the Huntsman. When Hounds are told to come back, they should come *behind* the Huntsman.

I don't like Hounds put into covert all of a heap; rather let them go in picking their own smeuse to begin with.

"A fox well found," says Beckford, "is half killed. People generally are in too great a hurry on this

occasion. The Hounds are always mad enough when they find a fox. If the men be mad also, they make mad work indeed."

In drawing coverts, do not let your men keep continually rating Hounds, "Heu back."

Old Hounds know pretty well where to find a fox, and if you draw up wind, it is of little consequence how they rake on forward. "The reason," Beckford continues, "for drawing up wind is, that the fox does not hear you. If he turns down wind, as he probably will, it lets all the Hounds into the cry." If you draw down wind, you will probably leave all the Hounds that are far up wind behind you when the fox is found. In small coverts it is of little consequence.

Make Hounds work for themselves. Don't holloa the foxes across the Rides unless you have a good chance at a tired fox, but cheer the Hounds over the Rides and keep them together with "Hark, cry, Hark!"

In running through woods the Huntsman should be well up to his leading Hounds. Whippers-in—one on each flank—keep Hounds from breaking off on other lines, and rattle them up, *not rate them up to the cry*. In taking the Hounds to a halloo, a fox having crossed a ride in a wood, the Huntsman should go down the side of the ride *from* which the fox has come, keeping

the Hounds on the side which the fox has gone *to*, and thus avoid the risk of taking the heel way. In riding forward to get a view at a fox, keep wide of the line, and never risk getting before the Hounds. "There is little difference in the speed of Hounds. The great difference is in the head they carry!"

As far as my experience goes, as long as Hounds are on the line, the Field is inclined to give them a chance. When off the line, and while the Huntsman is casting, the Field will not stand still, and it is of no use expecting them to do so. If you are hunting a fox with a bad scent, and cannot get on, you are in a better position if you *give it up* and go to draw for another, than if you lose the fox and lose a lot of time, and are obliged to look for another, because you don't know where he has gone.

"But," says Beckford, "never give up a beaten fox *while there is a chance.*"

Some hounds in a galloping country chase well, carry a good head, and don't tire; but they draw badly, will not drive a fox in covert, are idle at a check, few of them trying. They do not cast wide enough, and instead of trying diligently, are continually jumping to see if the others have got on the line. This, I think, is from want of tongue, and from not being cheered when they hit off the line.

A cheer would bring them together in a moment and save time, as a Huntsman often sees that it is good before any Hound dares to speak; he may anticipate a Hound speaking, and a slight word will bring their heads in the right direction.

When on a line, keep behind the Hounds, and encourage them to work up to the leading Hounds. Don't ride up to the leading Hounds, and "View Holloa" for the rest to come up to you. That effectually prevents any Hound from using his nose, or hearing the cry of the leading Hounds. In casting give them plenty of time, and let them try in front of *you*; don't *you* ride before *them*.

I've seen Goodall, when his Hounds checked, stand still and let them cast themselves. When they had had time enough, he would give a slight cheer sufficient to make them look up, and wave his hand in the direction he wished them to go, and they'd cast themselves as handily as well-broken setters. I've also frequently seen him encourage them to try in two directions at the same time. In casting give your Hounds time to try according to the quality of the ground, and always take advantage of every bit of good scenting ground.

A common practice in a grass country, in going

through the stain of sheep, is to lift Hounds. That's well enough if you know the exact point to go to, but if you don't hit the exact place you lose a lot of time. Mr. Meynell seldom or never attempted to lift Hounds through sheep. My practice is to get behind them, press them on, and encourage them forward. In going to a certainty go as fast as you can get your Hounds there with you; it's no use getting there without them.

The following remarks were written to my Huntsman, George Cross, at Atherston, in 1855: "I do not mean to say that these are rules, for no man can hunt a fox by rule; but I want to make you think about them. In the first place, keep your Hounds light in condition. We have always had them higher than other people's without being superior to them. Now let us try the contrary, of course in moderation.

"In going to a holloa in covert you often come cheering your Hounds—'Hark! hark!' Some stray Hound hits a line, and your cheer sends the others to his cry, and brings back those which are nearer the holloa. '*Forward (get away forward), Hark, holloa! hark!*' in distinction to '*Hark cry.*' If the Hounds will come to my whistle, and I am nearer the fox than you are, *do not View holloa behind me*, the effect of which is to stop those which I have with me.

Holloa them on to me. As soon as you catch me, I will stop and go behind you. It is no use heading a fresh fox in a large wood; he only runs round the corner, and makes his point, and the Hounds overrun the turn and lose time. In going to a holloa, as soon as you get your Hounds in your hand, or a sufficient body of them, *go like* blazes up to the point; get them to move quick, and don't stop '*yo-yot'-ing*' by the way. Also, in casting while trying, go as slow as you like, but don't *yo-yote* where it is no use.

"When Hounds check, of course you want them to *spread all ways*, and try themselves. Sit still, and *hold your tongue*. From anxiety you often *yo-yote* almost before they check; the consequence is they all turn their heads in the same direction you turn your horse; if you were silent a moment longer they would try *both* ways. In galloping after a viewed fox let your Hounds pass you as soon as you get them clear of the horses."

The quickest Huntsman is the man who gets the concern to the point in working order. Getting there without the Hounds is worse than useless. There is no more melancholy sight than a Huntsman "View holloaing" when he can't get his Hounds to come to him.

Beckford says: "Huntsman who are slow of getting

to a holloa are devoid of common-sense, and frequently when they get there they are in too great a hurry; they ask, 'Which way did he go,' and don't wait for the answer, and the general consequence is you mistake the place, and have to return for information. The less you hurry on this occasion the more time you save. Wherever the fox was seen *for a certainty*, is the surest and best place to take the scent, and besides the certainty of going right, you probably will get on faster than by any other means."

If Hounds check crossing a road full of horsemen, if you have nothing to guide you, try *towards* the horses first; they will stand still while you do so. If you try *from* them, they will follow you, and you can never get back to the ground again where they checked if you wish it.

Hounds that are riotous in covert should be flogged in covert. Never rate Hounds except *while* in commission of a fault; rather take the rebels out alone, and lead them into mischief, and then drill them.

"Hounds must be made obedient," says Beckford, "but all the chastisement that can be inflicted will not make Hounds obedient, unless they are made to understand what is required of them."

"It is the judicious encouragement of Hounds to

hunt when they cannot *run*, and the preventing them from losing time by *hunting* when they *might run*, which distinguishes a good Huntsman from a bad one." "With a good scent cast quick, with a bad scent cast slow. When Hounds are picking on a cold scent, don't cast at all. It is the particular excellence of a Foxhound when rightly managed to get on faster with an indifferent scent than any other Hound. It is a quick method of hunting that I mostly value in a Hound; such as are possessed of it are seldom long off the scent. It is the reverse of slackness."

"Too much help will make Hounds slack. Too little will make them tie on the scent and hunt back the heel." "It is great impertinence in a Huntsman to make his cast before the Hounds have made theirs." "Some Huntsmen have a dull, stupid way of speaking to Hounds; others a harsh, disagreeable tone of voice; others a quick, nervous manner."

It is well enough to rouse Hounds when tired and slack; but when fresh, especially in Cubhunting, when the Hounds must be taught to hunt, they should be encouraged to draw slowly and perseveringly, and made to find their own fox.

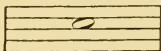
"*Yet, yet,*" spoken short and sharp, and the voice

pitched high, has a very different effect to "*yoi yōote*" slowly, and the last syllable drawn out and the voice not pitched too high. When hounds have found their fox, cheer them with "*Hark, cry, hark,*" and the "*yoi over*" at the rides, which is always a good chance of getting the stragglers together.

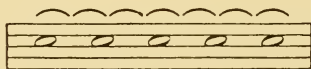
When they leave the covert, "*Hark away*" and a "View holloa" or two and a few notes on the horn to let your men know. Then the men may cheer them away loudly for the information of the Field. Hound language should be cheery and melodious, distinct and encouraging, and have both meaning and expression. There is no melody in "*h-o-o-o-o-ier*" to call Hounds to you; rather "*hilloo hilloope*."

Many Huntsmen blow the same monotonous note all day long, without variation or meaning; a single note of the horn may be used to call Hounds on in

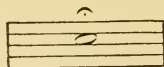
drawing a covert—



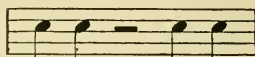
A prolonged swelling
note to call them
away—



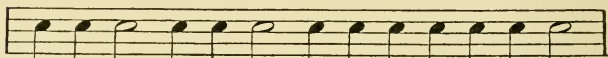
A long single note when all away—



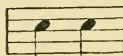
A double note when on a scent
(called doubling the horn)—



Two short notes and a long one for "Gone away"—

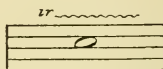


"Tally ho! back"—



on horn and crack
of whip.

A rattle for "Whoo, whoop"—



(In some Hunts a whistle is used for "Gone away."
I used it for a "View holloa" to save my voice.)
"Forward" should be used only in chase.

If you run a fox to ground, and dig for him, let the Hounds wind him and bay at him and pull him out. Don't take him away from them, but keep up the excitement all the time.

When you kill a fox, don't keep the Hounds waiting for him. Cut off the brush; cheer them on to him; and chuck him up. Pick up the pads and head afterwards. Old Hounds are almost sure to get them, and it will do no harm taking them from

them. There is something disgusting in the appearance of a fox with his head and pads cut off. During cubhunting let the Hounds often run into a fox and kill him, and eat him without taking him away from them. It makes them keen and teaches them to look out for themselves.

If Hounds do not pull their fox to pieces keenly, you can generally make them do so by not leaving hold of the fox and pulling against them. "Where Hounds are out of blood there is a kind of evil genius attending all they do," says Beckford. "Whilst a pack of Hounds well in blood, like troops flushed with conquest, are not easily withstood. What we call 'ill luck' is generally being out of blood."

There is no satisfaction like a good day's sport. George Whyte-Melville said, "after a good day, he felt as if he had done a good action."

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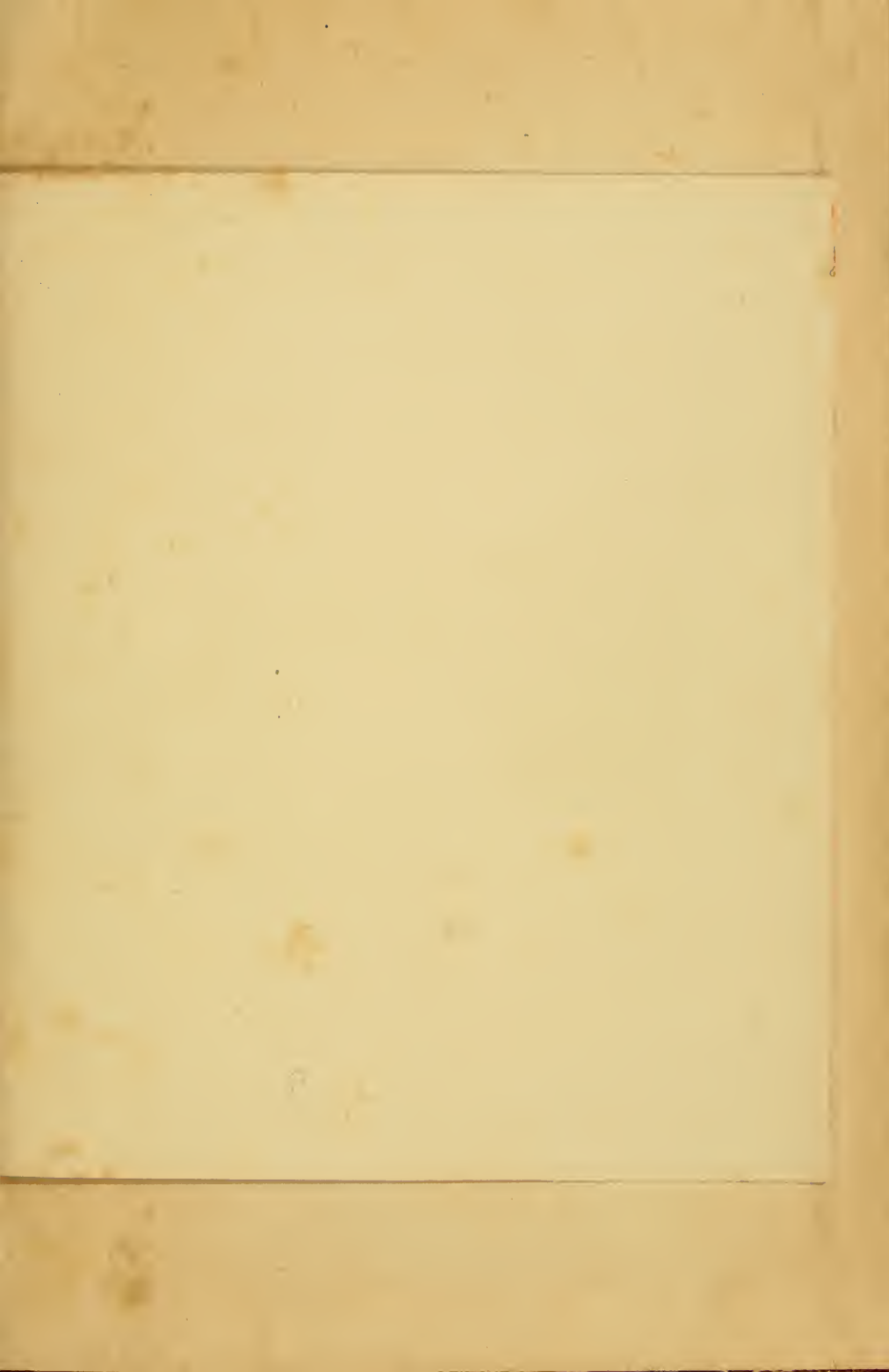
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